

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-07 IO-13 NEA-10 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03
AF-10 /089 W
-----281500Z 113737 /47

P R 281213Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3313
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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FROM PM DIRECTOR GELB

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, US, UK, XO
SUBJECT: US-FRENCH INDIAN OCEAN TALKS - MAY 27

1. SUMMARY: US TEAM DISCUSSED INDIAN OCEAN ISSUES, INCLUDING US ARMS CONTROL INITIATIVE, WITH FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTRY GROUP LED BY DEPUTY POLITICAL DIRECTOR, YVES PAGNIEZ, AND INCLUDING ACTING CHIEF PACTS AND DISARMAMENTS ANDRE MISTRAL, MAY 27. FRENCH REGISTERED THEIR CONCERNS REGARDING OUR INDIAN OCEAN CONTROL CONCEPTS, CENTERING MAINLY ON PRECEDENTIAL EFFECTS. REGARDING THE HORN OF AFRICA, THEY TOOK THE VIEW THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS PROBABLY EXERCISING SOME RESTRAINT. MAIN POINTS OF THE DISCUSSION ARE OUTLINED BELOW. END SUMMARY

2. WE DESCRIBED THE APPROACH WE PLAN TO TAKE IN THE MOSCOW INDIAN OCEAN WORKING GROUP MEETING IN MID-JUNE, EMPHASIZING THAT WE WOULD BE EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR NEGOTIATION RATHER THAN MAKING SPECIFIC PROPOSALS OR PRESENTING A FIRM US POSITION ON ELEMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN AN ARMS LIMITATION AGREEMENT. WE
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NOTED THAT DECISIONS HAVE NOT BEEN TAKEN ON COMPREHENSIVE NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND THAT THESE WOULD DEPEND ON THE RESULTS OF THE MOSCOW TALKS, AS WELL AS FURTHER ANALYSIS NOW UNDER WAY. WE STRESSED THAT WE WERE CONSULTING FRANCE AS AN ALLY, AND NOT SUGGESTING THAT WE WISHED FRANCE TO JOIN AN ARMS CONTROL ARRANGEMENT FOR THE AREA.

3. AFTER HEARING OUR PRESENTATION PAGNIEZ ASKED WHY, IN VIEW OF THE RELATIVE STABILITY IN SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, WE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO RAISE THE SUBJECT OF FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS. HE ASKED WHETHER A TACIT AGREEMENT ON BOTH SIDES NOT TO INCREASE THEIR FORCES WOULD NOT GAIN ALL THE ADVANTAGES WE SOUGHT, WITHOUT THE RISKS. WE RESPONDED THAT THREE PRINCIPAL REASONS HAD LED US TO RAISE THIS ISSUE: 1) TO EXPAND DETENTE, AND DEMONSTRATE THAT WE AND THE SOVIETS CAN WORK TOGETHER TO AVOID CONFRONTATION; 2) TO MOVE NOW TO PREVENT A COMPETITION IN INDIAN OCEAN ARMAMENTS WHILE LEVELS ARE STILL LOW, AND THERE ARE CONSEQUENTLY FEWER COMPLICATIONS; AND 3) TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE FROM THE SOVIETS, AND NOT PERMIT THEM TO GAIN PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE FROM THEIR ARMS CONTROL POSTURE WITHOUT HAVING TO BACK IT UP. WE NOTED THAT THE SOVIET RESPONSE HAD BEEN NEGATIVE UP TO NOW. THEY HAVE FOCUSED EXCLUSIVELY ON DIEGO GARCIA WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR OWN ACTIVITIES AT BERBERA. AS WE MOVE TOWARD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS, WE SAID, WE WOULD VALUE ANY FRENCH ESTIMATE OF THE PROBABLE SOVIET POSITION ON INDIAN OCEAN ISSUES.

4. PAGNIEZ SAID -- AS HE HAD POINTED OUT IN WASHINGTON LAST MONTH -- THAT FRANCE HAS IMPORTANT INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. CHIEF AMONG THESE ARE THE SECURITY OF ITS SHIPPING ROUTES, ESPECIALLY FOR ENERGY RESOURCES, AND THE SECURITY OF FRENCH TERRITORIES IN THE OCEAN AREA (E.G., REUNION). FRANCE IS THUS CONCERNED ABOUT
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THE POSSIBLE PREJUDICIAL EFFECT ON THESE INTERESTS OF A US-SOVIET NEGOTIATION ON INDIAN OCEAN FORCE LEVELS.

5. PAGNIEZ SAID THAT THE FRENCH ARE ALSO WORRIED THAT A US-SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENT WOULD INCREASE PRESSURES FOR THE "ZONE OF PEACE" CAMPAIGN BEING PUSHED BY THE LITTORAL STATES IN THE UN.

6. WE RESPONDED THAT WE TOOK FRENCH VIEWS SERIOUSLY, AND HAD CONSIDERED THE ISSUES THEY RAISED. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT US-SOVIET FORCES CAN BE CONSIDERED APART FROM THOSE OF OTHER COUNTRIES. A BILATERAL US-SOVIET AGREEMENT CAN BE CLEARLY DISTINGUISHED FROM A "ZONE OF PEACE" DESIGNED AND PROPOUNDED BY THE LITTORAL STATES AROUND A LARGE AREA OF THE HIGH SEAS. WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RIGHT OF LITTORAL COUNTRIES TO REGULATE THE NAVAL ACTIVITIES OF OUTSIDE POWERS. WE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT

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AF-10 /089 W
-----281500Z 113748 /47

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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BETWEEN THE US AND THE SOVIETS COULD, HOWEVER, FULFILL
SOME OF THE OBJECTIVES SOUGHT BY PROPONENTS OF THE
"ZONE OF PEACE."

7. PAGNIEZ SAID THAT FRANCE WAS ALSO WORRIED ABOUT THE
PRECEDENTIAL EFFECTS ON OTHER AREAS OF A US-SOVIET
I.O. AGREEMENT. THEIR PRIMARY CONCERN IS THE
MEDITERRANEAN WHERE THE NOTION OF ARMS LIMITATIONS HAS
BEEN RAISED ALREADY BY YUGOSLAVIA, MALTA, AND SOME OF
THE NORTH AFRICAN ARAB COUNTRIES. DEMILITARIZATION OF
THE MEDITERRANEAN COULD COME UP IN THE BELGRADE CSCE
MEETING AND THE US SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT NEXT
YEAR. A US-SOVIET AGREEMENT ON THE INDIAN OCEAN WOULD,
IN THE FRENCH VIEW, ADD STIMULUS TO SUCH EFFORTS.

8. WE RESPONDED THAT HERE TOO WE BELIEVE THE PRECEDENT-
IAL PROBLEM IS NOT SERIOUS. THE MEDITERRANEAN
IS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE
MILITARY BALANCE IS EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND THE OPPOSITION
OF MANY LITTORAL COUNTRIES (INCLUDING PRESUMABLY FRANCE)
WOULD PRECLUDE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARMS CONTROL REGIME
UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. WE INDICATED WE WERE NOT
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DISMISSING FRENCH CONCERNS, BUT HAD ANALYZED THE PRECEDENT ISSUE AND WERE CONVINCED THAT IT COULD BE AVOIDED.

9. THE FRENCH SIDE RAISED A NUMBER OF DETAILED QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR VIEWS ON THE ELEMENTS TO BE DISCUSSED IN MOSCOW, FOCUSING ESPECIALLY ON VERIFICATION PROBLEMS AND THE ASYMMETRY OF US AND SOVIET FORCES, WHICH WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH A BASIS OF COMPARISON FOR BALANCED REDUCTIONS. WE SAID WE APPRECIATED THEIR VIEWS AND EMPHASIZED THAT WE HAD NOT YET MADE FIRM DECISIONS ON THESE ISSUES.

10. IN DISCUSSING THE HORN OF AFRICA, THE FRENCH CONCENTRATED ON THE UNSTABLE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA. HARREL, OF THE QUAI AFRICAN DEPARTMENT, TOOK A NUANCED VIEW OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES, AND BELIEVE THE SOVIETS ARE EXERCISING SOME PRUDENCE AS A RESULT OF THE DECLINE THEIR PRESTIGE HAD SUFFERED ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA FOLLOWING ANGOLAN INVOLVEMENT IN ZAIRE. WE EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM. THE FRENCH SAID THEY WERE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ETHIOPIAN ACCEPTANCE OF AN INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI AFTER FRANCE RELINQUISHES CONTROL NEXT MONTH, BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE OUTLOOK IS FAR FROM CLEAR.

11. THE FRENCH EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OUR VISIT. THE ATMOSPHERE THROUGHOUT WAS CORDIAL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS15847
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770191-1039
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2529557
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-FRENCH INDIAN OCEAN TALKS - MAY 27
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, US, UK, XO, (PAGNIEZ, YVES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b4a6a494-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009